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FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0160
INFO RUEHWH/WESTERN HEMISPHERIC AFFAIRS DIPL POSTS IMMEDIATE
RUEAHND/COMJTF-B SOTO CANO HO IMMEDIATE
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 TEGUCIGALPA 000614

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SENSITIVE

STATE FOR WHA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [CASC](#) [MARR](#) [KDEM](#) [PHUM](#) [ASEC](#) [AEMR](#) [KFLO](#) [PINR](#)

AMGT, HO, TFH01

SUBJECT: TFH01: HONDURAS COUP SITREP #21 07/17/2009 AS OF
13:00 LOCAL (15:00 EDT)

REF: TEGUCIGALPA 607 AND PREVIOUS

DEMONSTRATIONS AND OTHER ACTIVITY

¶1. (U) As of 09:00 local (11:00 EDT), pro-Zelaya demonstrations today, July 17, were expected to be similar to those of yesterday, July 16 (Reftel), with demonstrators congregated around the CA-5, Honduras's main highway, at the north and south ends of Tegucigalpa. As of 09:40 local (11:40 EDT), approximately 200 pro-Zelaya demonstrators blocked transit on the CA-5 to southern Honduras and 1,300 Zelaya supporters blocked the northern route as well. Other road closures are reported in northern Honduras. As of 10:50 local (12:50 EDT), the numbers of demonstrators rose to between 1,500 and 1,800 blocking the southern artery and 1,300 remain on the northern route.

¶2. (U) Post has observed a dramatic escalation in gang-related violence in the last week with 24 reported deaths believed to be due to territorial and narcotrafficking disputes. Post will prepare a full report SepTel.

¶3. (SBU) Police contacts report five Nicaraguans posing as students and student counselors at a school in El Progreso (northern Honduras) have been arrested after being unable to "justify their presence in the country." Police searched the house they were renting and found only mattresses. Three Nicaraguans were also detained for questioning in Olancho, eastern Honduras.

¶4. (SBU) Undercover police sources report a significant increase of people crossing the land border into Honduras away from official crossings, which they attribute to the political crisis. Post will continue to monitor the situation, though Honduran authorities have limited resources to patrol the "blind crossings."

¶5. (SBU) Representatives from U.S. franchises met with EconOff on June 16. A representative from INTUR, a company which represents Burger King, Popeyes, Little Ceasars, Church's Chicken, Dunkin' Donuts, Baskin Robbins and Chilis, as well as a representative from the McDonalds franchise

expressed concern for their businesses and reported that their restaurants have been significantly damaged by protests, graffiti, and vandalism. They have also experienced a severe loss in revenue due to the curfew and political unrest. McDonalds reported that damages total USD 50,000 not including business lost. A Burger King in San Pedro Sula was bombed. They believe that the attacks are directly aimed at U.S. businesses, evidenced by the fact that not a single Pollo Campero (a Guatemalan company) has been damaged. They also presented a letter that has circulated asking the Honduran people to protest U.S. businesses calling the United States "golpistas."

¶6. (U) The de facto government reinstated the curfew July 15 following a heightened state of alert by the national police force. Last night, July 16, the curfew was imposed from 23:30 to 04:30 local time (01:30 to 06:30 EDT). PAO and RSO noted that curfew times have been variable, with several print media and otherwise reliable sources circulating incorrect times. A/CG will add a statement to the Warden Message urging AmCits to consult television and radio announcements each night to determine the correct curfew hours. Police contacts confirmed that 64 people were arrested nationwide last night for violating the curfew.

¶7. (U) Rumors of deposed President Zelaya's potential return and resulting violence continue to cause alarm. Several local Embassy staff utilized Post's liberal leave policy for the first time today, July 17, out of concern for their ability to safely commute.

TEGUCIGALP 00000614 002 OF 002

Infrastructure and Communications

¶8. (U) Toncontin Airport remains open and has been operating since Tuesday afternoon, July 7. All American Airlines flights were cancelled yesterday, Jul 16, and today, July 17. One Continental flight was cancelled this morning due to maintenance issues unrelated to the political situation. Delta flights continue operating as normal. San Pedro Sula airport remains open for international flights, and American, Continental and Delta Airlines continue to operate flights as usual to and from that destination.

¶9. (U) As of 10:30 local (12:30 EDT), there were approximately 80 demonstrators blocking traffic on the Salvadorian side of the Honduras-El Salvador border crossing at El Amatillo. All other land borders are reportedly open to both private and commercial traffic.

¶10. (U) As of Friday morning, there are no reports of abnormal public utility outages in the country.

Consular and Embassy Operations

¶11. (U) The Embassy remains open for all regular consular services today, July 17. Barring a change in the security situation, the consular section plans to be open for regular consular services until further notice.

¶12. (U) The Consular Section continues to receive approximately 50 inquiries each day from AmCits regarding the political situation. Post issued an updated Warden Message yesterday afternoon, July 16. The Consular Section continues to regularly update ACS information on the Embassy website.

¶13. (SBU) The next EAC will take place Friday July 17, at 14:00 local time (16:00 EDT).
LLORENS